

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA**

JOE CHRISTIANA FOOD  
DISTRIBUTORS, INC., individually and  
on behalf of all other similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

Agri Stats, Inc., Clemens Food Group,  
LLC, Hormel Foods Corporation, Indiana  
Packers Corporation, JBS USA, Seaboard  
Foods, LLC, Smithfield Foods, Inc.,  
Triumph Foods, LLC, Tyson Foods, Inc.,  
Tyson Prepared Foods, Inc., and Tyson  
Fresh Meats, Inc.

Defendants.

Case No.

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

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Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of itself individually and on behalf of a plaintiff class consisting of all persons and entities who purchased pork directly from a Defendant or co-conspirator named in this complaint in the United States from at least January 1, 2009 until the present (Class Period). Plaintiff brings this action against Defendants for injunctive relief and treble damages under the antitrust laws of the United States, and demands a trial by jury.

## I. NATURE OF ACTION

1. The pork integrator-Defendants are the leading suppliers of pork in an industry with approximately \$20 billion in annual commerce. The pork industry is highly concentrated, with a small number of large producers in the United States controlling supply. Defendants and their co-conspirators collectively control over 80 percent of the wholesale pork market.

2. These Defendants, Agri Stats, Inc. (“Agri Stats”), Clemens Food Group, LLC (“Clemens”), Hormel Foods Corporation (“Hormel”), Indiana Packers Corporation (“Indiana Packers”), JBS USA, Seaboard Foods LLC (“Seaboard”), Smithfield Foods, Inc. (“Smithfield”), Triumph Foods, LLC (“Triumph”), Tyson Foods, Inc., Tyson Prepared Foods, Inc., and Tyson Fresh Meats, Inc. (“Tyson”), entered into a conspiracy from at least 2009 to the present to fix, raise, maintain, and stabilize the price of pork.<sup>1</sup> The principal (but not exclusive) method by which Defendants implemented and

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this complaint, pork includes pig meat purchased fresh or frozen, smoked ham, sausage and bacon. From time to time in this complaint, “pork” and “swine” are used interchangeably, particularly when referring to the pork or swine industry.

executed their conspiracy was by coordinating their output and limiting production with the intent and expected result of increasing pork prices in the United States. In furtherance of their conspiracy, Defendants exchanged detailed, competitively sensitive, and closely guarded non-public information about prices, capacity, sales volume and demand through their co-conspirator, Defendant Agri Stats.

3. Beginning in at least 2009, Agri Stats began providing highly sensitive “benchmarking” reports to the majority of pork integrators. Benchmarking allows competitors to compare their profits or performance against that of other companies. But Agri Stats’ reports are unlike those of other lawful industry reports. Agri Stats gathers detailed financial and production data from each of the pork integrators, standardizes this information, and produces customized reports and graphs for the co-conspirators. The type of information available in these reports is not the type of information that competitors would share with each other in a normal, competitive market. Instead, the provision of this detailed information acts as the modern equivalent of the proverbial smoke-filled room of the cartels of yesteryear. Agri Stats collected the pork integrators’ competitively sensitive supply and pricing data and intentionally shared that information through detailed reports it provided to the pork integrators. On a weekly and monthly basis, Agri Stats provides the pork integrators with current and forward-looking sensitive information (such as profits, costs, prices and slaughter information), and regularly provides the keys to deciphering which data belongs to which producers. The effect of this information exchange was to allow the pork integrators to monitor each other’s production and hence control supply and price.

4. This data exchange through Agri Stats bears all the hallmarks of the enforcement mechanism of a price-fixing scheme. First, the data is current and forward-looking – which courts consistently hold has “the greatest potential for generating anticompetitive effects.”<sup>2</sup> Second, information contained in Agri Stats reports is specific to pork producers, including information on profits, prices, costs and production levels, instead of being aggregated as industry averages, thus avoiding transactional specificity and easy identification of specific producers. Third, none of the Agri Stats information was publicly available. Agri Stats is a subscription service which required the co-conspirators to pay millions of dollars over the Class Period – far in excess of any other pricing and production indices. Agri Stats ensured that its detailed, sensitive business information was available only to the co-conspirators and not to any buyers in the market.

5. The pork producers admitted in public calls that they had discussed production cuts at least once, and publicly signaled to each other that no supply increases would happen.

6. In addition, there are numerous “plus factors” in the swine industry during the Class Period, including but not limited to multiple industry characteristics which facilitate collusion, such as high vertical integration, high barriers to entry, high pork industry consolidation and concentration, inelastic supply and demand, and a lack of significant substitutes for pork.

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<sup>2</sup> *Todd v. Exxon Corp.*, 275 F.3d 191, 2011 (2d Cir. 2001) (Sotomayor, J.) (quoting *United States v. Gypsum Co.*, 438 U.S. 422, 441 n.16 (1978)).

7. Defendants' restriction of pork supply had the intended purpose and effect of increasing pork prices to Plaintiff and class members. Beginning in 2009, the earnings of the integrators began to increase as they took an increasing amount of the profits available in the pork industry. As a result of Defendants' unlawful conduct, Plaintiff and the classes paid artificially inflated prices for pork during the Class Period. Such prices exceeded the amount they would have paid if the price for pork had been determined by a competitive market. Thus, Plaintiff and class members were injured by Defendants' conduct.

## **II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

8. Plaintiff brings this action under Sections 4 and 16 of the Clayton Act, 15 U.S.C. §§15 and 26, for injunctive relief and to recover treble damages and the costs of this suit, including reasonable attorneys' fees, against Defendants for the injuries sustained by Plaintiff and the members of the Plaintiff Class by virtue of Defendants' violations of Section 1 of the Sherman Act, 15 U.S.C. §1.

9. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1337, and Sections 4 and 16 of the Clayton Act, 15 U.S.C. §§15(a) and 26.

10. Venue is appropriate in this District under Sections 4, 12, and 16 of the Clayton Act, 15 U.S.C. §§15, 22 and 26 and 28 U.S.C. §1391(b), (c) and (d), because one or more Defendants resided or transacted business in this District, is licensed to do business or is doing business in this District, and because a substantial portion of the affected interstate commerce described herein was carried out in this District.

11. This Court has personal jurisdiction over each Defendant because, *inter alia*, each Defendant: (a) transacted business throughout the United States, including in this District; (b) manufactured, sold, shipped, and/or delivered substantial quantities of pork throughout the United States, including this District; (c) had substantial contacts with the United States, including this District; and/or (d) engaged in an antitrust conspiracy that was directed at and had a direct, foreseeable, and intended effect of causing injury to the business or property of persons residing in, located in, or doing business throughout the United States, including this District.

12. The activities of the Defendants and all co-conspirators, as described herein, were within the flow of, were intended to, and did have direct, substantial and reasonably foreseeable effects on the interstate commerce of the United States.

13. No other forum would be more convenient for the parties and witnesses to litigate this case.

### **III. PARTIES**

#### **A. Plaintiff**

14. Plaintiff Joe Christiana Food Distributors, Inc. is a Louisiana corporation with its principal place of business in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It purchased pork directly from one or more Defendants during the Class Period and suffered antitrust injury as a result of the violations alleged in this Complaint.

#### **B. Defendants**

15. Agri Stats, Inc. is an Indiana corporation located in Fort Wayne, Indiana and is a subsidiary of Eli Lilly & Co. Throughout the Class Period, Agri Stats acted as a co-



conspirator of Defendant Producers by facilitating the exchange of confidential, proprietary, and competitively sensitive data among Defendants and their co-conspirators.

16. Clemens Food Group, LLC is a limited-liability company headquartered in Hatfield, Pennsylvania. During the Class Period, Clemens and/or its predecessors, wholly owned or controlled subsidiaries, or affiliates sold pork in interstate commerce, directly or through its wholly owned or controlled affiliates, to purchasers in the United States.

17. Hormel Foods Corporation is a Delaware corporation engaged in the production of meat and food products, and the marketing of these products. Hormel Foods is headquartered in Austin, Minnesota. During the Class Period, Hormel Foods and/or its predecessors, wholly owned or controlled subsidiaries, or affiliates sold pork in interstate commerce, directly or through its wholly owned or controlled affiliates, to purchasers in the United States.

18. Indiana Packers Corporation is an Indiana corporation engaged in the production of meat and food products, and the marketing of these products. Indiana Packers is headquartered in Delphi, Indiana. During the Class Period, Indiana Packers and/or its predecessors, wholly owned or controlled subsidiaries, or affiliates sold pork in interstate commerce, directly or through its wholly owned or controlled affiliates, to purchasers in the United States.

19. JBS USA is one of the world's largest beef and pork processing companies and an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of Brazilian-based JBS SA. JBS USA is a wholly owned subsidiary of JBS USA Holdings, Inc., which holds a 78.5 percent

controlling interest in Pilgrim's Pride Corporation, one of the largest chicken-producing companies in the world. JBS USA is a Delaware corporation, headquartered in Greeley, Colorado. During the Class Period, JBS USA and/or its predecessors, wholly owned or controlled subsidiaries, or affiliates sold pork in interstate commerce, directly or through its wholly owned or controlled affiliates, to purchasers in the United States.

20. Seaboard Foods LLC is a limited-liability company headquartered in Shawnee Mission, Kansas. During the Class Period, Seaboard Foods LLC and/or its predecessors, wholly owned or controlled subsidiaries, or affiliates sold pork in interstate commerce, directly or through its wholly owned or controlled affiliates, to purchasers in the United States.

21. Smithfield Foods, Inc. is incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of WH Group Limited, the largest pork company in the world.<sup>3</sup> Smithfield Foods is headquartered in Smithfield, Virginia. During the Class Period, Smithfield Foods, Inc. and/or its predecessors, wholly owned or controlled subsidiaries, or affiliates sold pork in interstate commerce, directly or through its wholly owned or controlled affiliates, to purchasers in the United States.

22. Triumph Foods, LLC is a limited-liability company headquartered in St. Joseph, Missouri. During the Class Period, Triumph Foods and/or its predecessors, wholly owned or controlled subsidiaries, or affiliates sold pork in interstate commerce,

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<sup>3</sup> 2014 Annual Report, WH Group at 175, Smithfield, <https://www.smithfieldfoods.com/investor-relations> (last visited June 26, 2018).

directly or through its wholly owned or controlled affiliates, to purchasers in the United States.

23. Tyson Foods, Inc. is a publicly traded Delaware corporation headquartered in Springdale, Arkansas. During the Class Period, Tyson Foods, Inc. and/or its predecessors, wholly owned or controlled subsidiaries, or affiliates sold pork in interstate commerce, directly or through its wholly owned or controlled affiliates, to purchasers in the United States.

24. Tyson Prepared Foods, Inc. is a Delaware corporation headquartered in Springdale, Arkansas and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tyson Foods, Inc. During the Class Period, Tyson Prepared Foods, Inc. sold pork in interstate commerce, directly or through its wholly-owned or controlled affiliates, to purchasers in the United States.

25. Tyson Fresh Meats, Inc. is a Delaware corporation headquartered in Springdale, Arkansas and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tyson Foods, Inc. During the Class Period, Tyson Fresh Meats, Inc. sold pork in interstate commerce, directly or through its wholly-owned or controlled affiliates, to purchasers in the United States.

26. Defendants Tyson Foods, Inc., Tyson Prepared Foods, Inc., and Tyson Fresh Meats, Inc. are collectively referred to as “Tyson.”

#### **IV. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

27. Starting in at least 2009 and continuing to the present, Defendants coordinated to fix, raise, maintain and stabilize pork prices. To effectuate and ensure the stability of their anticompetitive agreement, Defendants relied on a unique industry data sharing service known as Agri Stats. Agri Stats provided a means for Defendants to

obtain and monitor critical and competitively sensitive business information regarding each other's production metrics, thereby serving as a central and critical part of Defendants' price-fixing scheme, resulting in a stable and successful anticompetitive cartel.

**A. Defendants' anticompetitive scheme started from Agri Stats' central role in collusion in the broiler industry.**

28. Agri Stats has played a central role in other industries, including collusion in the broiler industry.<sup>4</sup> As alleged in the *In re Broiler Chicken Antitrust Litigation*, No. 16-cv-08637 (N.D. Ill.), the broiler producers used Agri Stats as a part of their conspiracy to restrain production and inflate prices.

29. In the broiler industry, Agri Stats collected and disseminated to the other members of the conspiracy disaggregated financial information (such as monthly operating profit, sales and cost per live pound), production volumes, capacity, slaughter information, inventory levels, and sales data for finished product form and type, amongst other pieces of competitively sensitive business information. The Agri Stats reports contain line-by-line entries for plants, lines, and yields of various broiler facilities. Agri Stats relied upon (and the co-conspirators agreed to) a detailed audit process to verify the accuracy of data from each broiler producer's complex, sometimes directly contacting the broiler Defendants to verify the data. Agri Stats also provided detailed price reports to the broiler industry through its subsidiary, Express Markets, Inc. also known as EMI.

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<sup>4</sup> Broilers are chickens raised to be slaughtered before the age of 13 weeks.

Agri Stats collected data from the broiler producers on a weekly basis and provided its reports to broiler producers on a weekly and monthly basis.

30. The detail of these reports ensured that competitors could quickly decode the information of their purported competitors. The *Broiler* complaints allege it was common knowledge that the detail of the Agri Stats reports allowed any reasonably informed producer to discern the identity of the competitors' individual broiler complexes. The broiler reports, in parts, contained so few producers participating that the identities were obvious. Other reports contained such detailed data that it could be matched with the publicly stated aggregate data for larger broiler defendants such as Tyson. The complaints allege that Agri Stats purposefully circulated this information to top executives to facilitate agreement on supply, constraints, and price.

31. In the broiler industry, plaintiffs also alleged that Agri Stats – known to its co-conspirators to be a willing and informed conduit for illicit information exchanges – used public and semi-public forums to convey messages to industry participants that furthered the purposes of the conspiracy by reassuring conspirators that production cuts would continue, and by inducing them to continue to act in concert to ensure they did. Agri Stats' own statements in the broiler industry facilitated the implementation of the agreement to restrict supply.

32. In denying defendants' motions to dismiss in the *In re Broiler Chicken Antitrust Litigation*, the district court noted that given the nature of the Agri Stats reports,

the defendants are in fact sharing future anticipated production information with one another, which raise significant antitrust concerns.<sup>5</sup>

**B. After success in the broiler industry, Agri Stats markets its collusive scheme to the swine integrators.**

33. Beginning in at least 2008, Agri Stats began to propose a series of benchmarks to the swine industry along the lines of the benchmarks used to restrict competition in the broiler industry. Benchmarking is the act of comparing practices, methods or performance against those of other companies.<sup>6</sup> Benchmarking of the type undertaken by Agri Stats and its co-conspirators here reduces strategic uncertainty in the market and changes the incentives for competitors to compete, thereby enabling companies to coordinate their market strategies and otherwise restrict competition. This is especially true where benchmarking involves the exchange of commercially sensitive information among competitors.

34. In 2008, Greg Bilbrey of Agri Stats told swine industry producers that “Benchmarking in the swine industry could range from simple production comparisons to elaborate and sophisticated total production and financial comparisons. *Each and*

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<sup>5</sup> Memorandum Opinion and Order at 11, *In re Broiler Chicken Antitrust Litigation*, No. 16-cv-08637 (N.D. Ill. Nov. 20, 2017), ECF No. 541.

<sup>6</sup> *Antitrust Issues Related to Benchmarking and Other Information Exchanges*, Federal Trade Commission (May 3, 2011), available at [https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/documents/public\\_statements/antitrust-issues-related-benchmarking-and-other-information-exchanges/110503roschbenchmarking.pdf](https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/documents/public_statements/antitrust-issues-related-benchmarking-and-other-information-exchanges/110503roschbenchmarking.pdf).

*every commercial swine operation is encouraged to participate in some benchmarking effort.*”<sup>7</sup>

35. Agri Stats emphasized to pork producers that the goal of the agreement to share information was profitability, not production, and invited pork producers again to participate in the benchmarking. Agri Stats emphasized that “We must remember that the *ultimate goal is increasing profitability* – not always increasing the level of production.” Furthermore, Agri Stats told the industry that “[e]ach swine production company should be participating in some type of benchmarking. *To gain maximum benefit, production, cost and financial performance should all be part of the benchmarking program.*”<sup>8</sup>

36. In April 2009, Agri Stats again invited swine producers to design and operate their own benchmarking effort. Greg Bilbrey of Agri Stats invited swine producers to design and operate their own benchmarking effort: “Though all producers may not be part of or fit into an Agri Stats type benchmarking program, all producers could participate in benchmarking in some way. Commercial benchmarking opportunities are available. *Producer groups could design and operate their own benchmarking effort.*”<sup>9</sup>

37. The pork producers did accept this offer and, beginning no later than 2009, created the detailed benchmarking scheme based upon and found in the Agri Stats reports. Defendants’ agreement was to use the exchanged benchmarking information to

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<sup>7</sup> Greg Bilbrey, *Benchmarking and Cost – Production Relationships*, 19 *Advances in Pork Production Journal*, 43 (2008).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 41-46.

<sup>9</sup> Greg Bilbrey, *Benchmarking and Tools to Maximize Profit*, London Swine Conference – Tools of the Trade (April 1-2, 2009).

coordinate supply and stabilize and increase prices of pork sold in the United States, to provide and receive information from Agri Stats, and to use this detailed sensitive information for the purposes of monitoring each other's production and pricing. The agreement was successful as pork prices rose significantly after the agreement was reached.

38. The volume of U.S. commerce in the pork industry is enormous. Total pork sales in the United States for a portion of the Class Period were:

2016 - \$18.9 billion  
2015 - \$21.0 billion  
2014 - \$26.4 billion  
2013 - \$23.4 billion

39. Each Defendant's annual sales of pork products are also very large. For example, in 2016 Smithfield reported \$3.7 billion of fresh pork sales, and an additional \$5 billion in packaged pork product sales. That same year, Tyson reported \$4.9 billion in pork sales. With such enormous revenues, the ability to stabilize or increase the margin even in small amounts has an enormous impact on profits.

**C. Agri Stats provided pork integrators the unparalleled ability to monitor pricing and production, and to discipline co-conspirators for not complying with the collusive agreement.**

40. Agri Stats provided pork integrators with an unparalleled ability to share critical and proprietary information concerning key business metrics, such as production levels and short and long-term production capacity. Agri Stats was key to the formation, operation and continuing stability of the Defendants' anticompetitive scheme. To effectuate their agreement, the participants had to have confidence that each member was



following through with the agreement by limiting their production and stabilizing prices. Agri Stats served that function.

41. Each member of the conspiracy, including swine integrators and Defendants Clemens, Hormel, Indiana Packers, JBS USA, Seaboard, Smithfield, Triumph, and Tyson, were all Agri Stats subscribers and reported their information to Agri Stats. Agri Stats' parent company, Eli Lilly, stated that "*over 90% of the poultry and pig market*" uses Agri Stats in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

42. Agri Stats collects participant financial and production data electronically each month. Internal auditors convert the data, prepare it for comparison, and perform the monthly audits. Each company's financial data is reconciled to its general ledger to help ensure actual costs are reported. Raw numbers are used in Agri Stats' standardized calculations so all company numbers are calculated the same way.<sup>11</sup>

43. Participants in the scheme received monthly detailed reports and graphs that allow them to compare their performance and costs to other participants, the average of all companies, the top 25 percent and the top five companies. Current month, previous quarter and previous twelve-month periods are reported. As of 2009, each monthly report contained nine sections for analysis and comparison: Performance Summary, Feed Mill, Ingredient Purchasing, Weaned Pig Production, Nursery, Finishing, Wean-to-Finish,

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<sup>10</sup> Transcript, Eli Lilly and Co. at Morgan Stanley Global Healthcare Conference (Sept. 13, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Greg Bilbrey, *Implementing Simple and Useful Production Benchmarking*, London Swine Conference – A Time for Change (March 28-29, 2012).

Market Haul, Profit and Sales.<sup>12</sup> Participants may also receive an abbreviated Key Performance Indicator report, as well as, historical graphs.<sup>13</sup>

44. Because of the nature of the life of a hog, even current and historical information regarding the production numbers of hogs provides forward-looking supply information to competitors. The typical hog production cycle lasts about 4 years. This is a function of the hog biological cycle. Given the length of time needed to breed an existing sow, choose and retain offspring for breeding, and breed and rear the resulting crop of piglets, it takes nearly 2 years to substantially increase production.

45. One presentation from Agri Stats shows the level of detail provided to competitors regarding profits in the pork market:<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Greg Bilbrey, *Benchmarking and Tools to Maximize Profit*, *supra* note 9.

<sup>13</sup> Greg Bilbrey, *Benchmarking and Cost-Production Relationships*, *supra* note 8.

<sup>14</sup> Greg Bilbrey, *Key Drivers to Farm Profitability* (2011).

**Top 25% in Profit - Variances to Average Company - 2009-2007**

	<u>Mkt</u> <u>Sales</u>	<u>Mkt</u> <u>%Culls</u>	<u>Fin</u> <u>Cost</u>	<u>Mkt</u> <u>Wt</u>	<u>Mkt</u> <u>Age</u>	<u>Nur/Fin</u> <u>Mort %</u>	<u>FIN</u> <u>FC</u> <u>Cals</u>	<u>FIN</u> <u>Feed</u> <u>\$/ton</u>	<u>Wean</u> <u>Pig \$</u>	<u># Born</u> <u>Live</u>	<u>Pre-Wn</u> <u>Mort %</u>	<u>Pigs/</u> <u>MSY</u>
<b>2009</b>												
VAR to AVG	2.93	-0.85	-2.17	3.98	-2.46	-2.05	-35.50	-9.39	-0.16	-0.20	-1.07	0.23
avg book	41.19	3.23	50.12	263	187.82	9.99	3862	215.18	28.68	11.60	14.69	22.05
% var to Avg	92.89	126.31	104.33	98.49	101.31	120.52	100.92	104.36	100.57	101.69	107.27	98.93
variance	12			11	7		8		9	6		10
ranking		1	5			2		4			3	

35,001,089 Pigs Finished

<b>2008</b>												
VAR to AVG	1.89	-1.08	-3.72	8.38	-6.75	-2.45	-20.56	-23.41	0.36	0.17	-2.34	1.50
avg book	47.44	3.09	55.00	261	189	11.18	3908	249.69	32.52	11.33	14.24	22.72
% var to Avg	96.01	134.94	106.76	96.79	103.57	121.92	100.53	109.38	98.88	98.46	116.46	93.42
variance	11			10	6		7		8	9		12
ranking		1	5			2		4			3	

30,785,319 Pigs finished

<b>2007</b>												
VAR to AVG	1.04	-0.51	-1.93	5.14	-2.29	-2.30	-75.57	-0.21	-1.00	0.09	-0.69	1.16
avg book	46.69	2.36	44.75	260	187	10.98	3913	182.98	28.16	11.12	14.05	22.40
% var to Avg	97.78	121.43	104.31	98.02	101.22	120.96	101.93	100.11	103.56	99.21	104.90	94.82
variance	11			10	7		6	8		9		12
ranking		1	4			2			5		3	

22,306,500 Pigs finished

46. The purpose of these reports was not to provide better prices to customers or to lower the costs of production. Instead, the purpose was to improve the profitability of the co-conspirators. The particular Agri Stats report referenced above shows the ranking of each company in profitability, and compares the company to its competitors by providing the variance from the average. On information and belief, the Agri Stats report actually circulated to competitors contained even further detail. The same presentation informed pork integrators that one of the “Advantages for Top 25% in Profit” was the “Sales Price: \$2 - \$6/ckg.” (ckg refers to 100 kilograms.) This underlines that the purpose of these reports was not to allow customers to save more money through lower prices and more efficient production – in fact, the opposite was true, the purpose was the profitability of the Defendant companies and the impact was higher prices for pork customers.

47. Much of the information shared by Agri Stats and the other Defendants was unnecessary to achieve any benefits for customers. Exchanging individual company data (particularly current data on prices and costs) is not required to achieve major efficiencies.<sup>15</sup>

48. Agri Stats knew that it played a central role in this conspiracy. Agri Stats repeatedly touted its role in standardizing the costs across companies – allowing the companies to compare the “apples to apples” of its data analysis among competitors. One presentation from Agri Stats spoke directly on this point, pointing out to industry participants that they could not undertake such a detailed cost analysis among competitors without Agri Stats auditing and standardizing the data:<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *FTC Roundtable on Information Exchanges Between Competitors Under Competition Law* Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, (Oct. 21, 2010) at 6, <https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/us-submissions-oecd-and-other-international-competition-fora/1010informationexchanges.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Greg Bilbrey, *Data Integrity*, Slideshare.net (Sept. 21, 2015), <https://www.slideshare.net/trufflemedia/greg-bilbrey-data-integrity-using-records-for-benchmarking-and-operations>.

## Data Integrity

- Benchmarking is very important but it is hard to make sure data is comparable across companies.
- Even if all companies include the same costs the costs can be calculated differently.
- Lots of variation in cost accounting in industry.
- Companies can select key metrics, common calculations and implement an effective benchmarking program.



49. Agri Stats stated that to ensure data contained in the reports was accurate, the participants had to “agree on calculation and data collection procedures,” they must “[d]etermine *tolerance and outlier status and enforce*,” they must “[h]ave an administrator to compile the data and enforce procedures,” and most importantly, “[e]ach *participant has to commit*.”<sup>17</sup>

50. In addition to these reports, Agri Stats’ account managers conducted on-site live reviews to assist with report utilization and analysis.<sup>18</sup> The information provided by Agri Stats was so detailed that clients frequently requested the site visits by Agri Stats employees to assist the co-conspirators in understanding the intricacies and implications of the data. Agri Stats’ employees each possessed expertise in a specific area of

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<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> Greg Bilbrey, *Benchmarking and Tools to Maximize Profit*, *supra* note 9.

production, and the value added by their insights was as important to the producers as the data in the books.

51. In May 2015, a subsidiary of Agri Stats, Express Markets, announced that it was adding its market analysis of pork to its product offerings in order to meet the broad information and knowledge needs of its customers. Express Markets started providing its extensive pricing reports to broiler producers in 2003.<sup>19</sup>

52. By providing detailed production statistics by producer, Agri Stats allowed each member of the conspiracy to monitor each other's ongoing adherence to agreed-upon plans for coordinated production limits. Critically, Agri Stats provided forward-looking data that allowed the other Defendants to determine each other's future production in addition to their current production.

53. Agri Stats reports are organized by company and facility, but the producers' names are not listed in the reports. Nevertheless, while nominally anonymous, the reports contain such detailed figures covering every aspect of pork production and sales that producers can accurately identify the companies behind the metrics. For example, long-time industry insiders are sufficiently familiar with each other to identify unique but recurring data points for other companies, as well as identify the other companies by general metrics and size.

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<sup>19</sup> Steve Meyer, *Paragon Economics Sold to Express Markets*, National Hog Farmer, May 26, 2015, available at <http://www.nationalhogfarmer.com/marketing/paragon-economics-sold-express-markets>.

54. Moreover, Agri Stats knew that the anonymity of its system was compromised by individuals who had gleaned knowledge of competitors' identification numbers, but reassigning numbers was an arduous undertaking the company was not eager to embark on.

55. Suppliers received as many as one dozen books of data at the end of each quarter, augmented by smaller monthly update books featuring the latest year-to-date information. Within these smaller monthly books, each supplier's own rows of year-to-date numbers were highlighted. In the front of each book, there were also markings indicating whose numbers were inside the book. The front of the book also included information indicating which other companies were represented in the data, though which number represented each competitor was not revealed.

56. Agri Stats mailed the reports to customers. On occasion, Agri Stats shipped a producer's book to one of its competitors. At times, suppliers just kept their competitors' books for future reference, which as noted above revealed the identity of that producer given that their numbers were highlighted by Agri Stats in their books.

57. Likewise, mobility within the meat production industries led to a situation where many workers at most pork production operations knew the numbers of other regional facilities, removing any anonymization of the data which may have existed. Agri Stats would hire industry participants to work in its offices, and then they would return to the industry knowing each of the allegedly "anonymous" numbers. Those working at Agri Stats were aware of this fact, but did nothing to address it.

58. Agri Stats' critical importance for a collusive scheme in the pork industry lies not only in the fact that it supplies the data necessary to coordinate production limitations and manipulate prices, but also in its stabilizing power. Anticompetitive cartels are subject to inherent instability in the absence of policing mechanisms, as each individual member of the cartel may have incentive to cheat on other members of the cartel, for example by ramping up pork production to capture higher prices as other cartel members limit production. Agri Stats' detailed production statistics serve as an indispensable monitoring function, allowing each member of the cartel to police each other's production figures (which were trustworthy because they had been verified) for signs of cheating.

59. In a February 15, 2017 Bloomberg article relating to Agri Stats' roles in the broiler industry, it was reported:

Peter Carstensen, a law professor at the University of Wisconsin and former Justice Department antitrust lawyer who has studied Agri Stats while researching the modern poultry industry, casts the level of plant-by-plant detail in the company's reports as "unusual." He explains that information-sharing services in other industries tend to deal in averaged-out aggregated data—for example, insurance rates in a given state. Such services run afoul of antitrust law, he says, when they offer projections or provide data so detailed that no competitor would reasonably share it with another. Getting detailed information is a particularly useful form of collusion, Carstensen says, because it allows co-conspirators to make sure they're all following through on the agreement. "This is one of the ways you do it. You make sure that your co-conspirators have the kind of information that gives them



confidence—so they can trust you, that you’re not cheating on them,” he says. “*That is what creates stability for a cartel.*”<sup>20</sup>

**D. The pork industry is nearly fully vertically integrated, which allowed the scheme to succeed.**

60. The pork production industry is almost completely vertically integrated, with four major producers controlling 75 percent of pork integration. Very large pork producers are commonly characterized as “contractors” or “integrators” who contract production of their hogs out to independent growers.<sup>21</sup> Integration is so pervasive that major producers are commonly called pork or swine integrators by the industry, government, analysts and academics.

61. In 2014, Smithfield had approximately 500 company-owned farms and approximately 2,190 contract farms in the United States. Smithfield described its arrangement with contract farms as follows:

Under our contract farm arrangements, contract farmers provide the initial facility investment, labor and frontline management in exchange for fixed service fees to raise hogs produced from our breeding stock under agreements typically ranging between five and ten years. We retain ownership of the hogs raised by our contract farmers. In 2014, approximately 76% of Smithfield’s hogs produced in the U.S. were finished on contract farms.<sup>22</sup>

62. Fully integrated companies have broad control over production processes, and near-total operational discretion in deciding how much to produce and when. As is

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<sup>20</sup> Christopher Leonard, *Is the Chicken Industry Rigged*, Bloomberg, (Feb. 15, 2017), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-02-15/is-the-chicken-industry-rigged>.

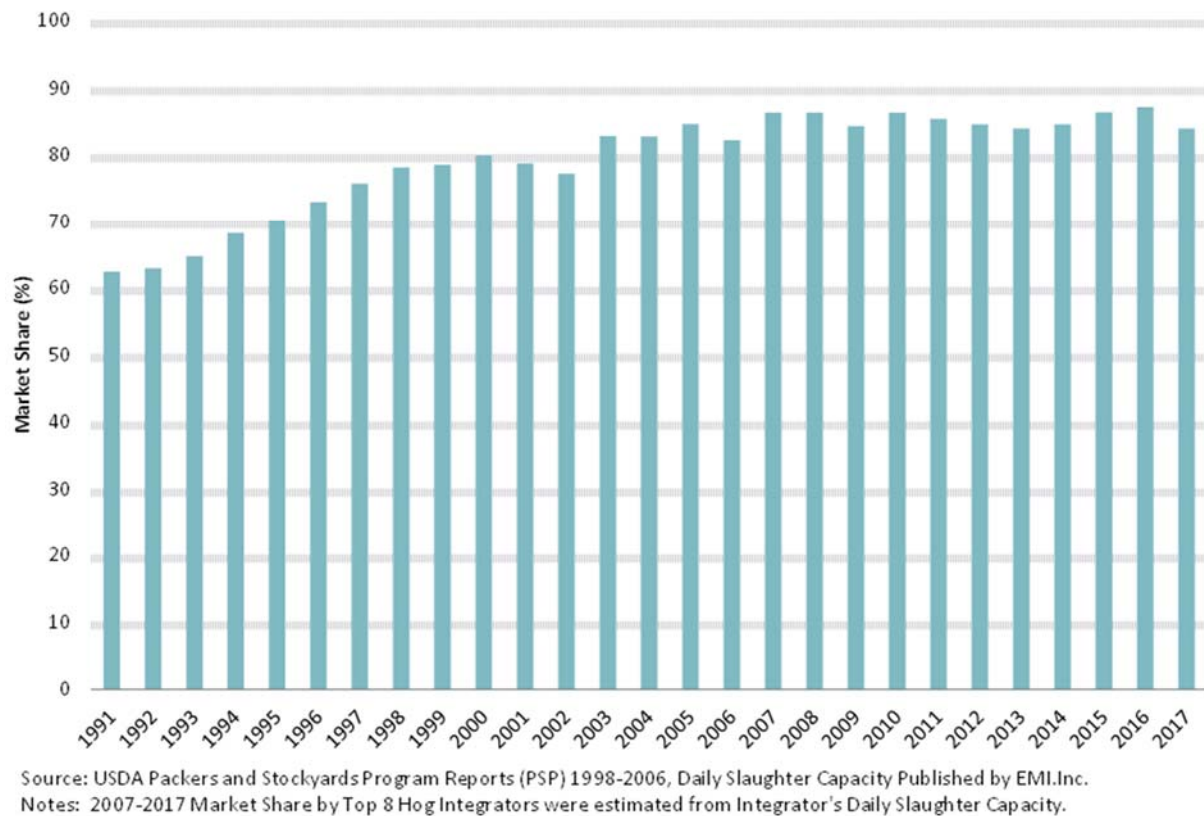
<sup>21</sup> Vertical Integration in the Pork Industry, University of Oregon (July 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Smithfield Foods Annual Report, at 27 (2014).

clear from Smithfield's annual report, under these arrangements, the pork integrators pay only fixed service fees to the farmers, who bear all of the investment costs of the hog-raising facilities. The pork integrator, here Smithfield, retains ownership of the hogs at all points in time. This arrangement essentially converts independent farmers that own their livestock into contract employees that perform services for the pork-packing industry.

**E. The level of concentration in the pork industry was optimal for Defendants' collusive scheme.**

63. Prior to and in the beginning of the Class Period, the pork industry underwent a period of unprecedented concentration, resulting in a small number of pork integrators controlling a large amount of market share. Between 1988 and 2015, the top four pork integrators (Smithfield, Tyson, JBS and Hormel) increased their market share from 34 percent in 1988 to just under 70 percent by 2015. The top eight integrators had market share of well over 80 percent for the entire Class Period:

**Figure 1: Market Share of Top 8 Pork Integrators 1991 to 2017**

64. The hog production sector is horizontally concentrated (only a few companies buy, slaughter and process the majority of hogs) and vertically integrated (pork packers have tight contractual relationships with hog producers throughout all stages of production). Meatpacking concentration levels are among the highest of any industry in the United States, and well above levels generally considered to elicit non-competitive behavior and result in adverse economic performance.

65. In July 2015, JBS USA announced it would acquire Cargill's pork business for \$1.45 billion. The acquisition joined the third and fourth largest pork packing

companies to surpass Tyson and became the second largest hog processor in the United States, behind only Smithfield.

66. The acquisition was completed in October 2015 and resulted in further consolidation in the industry. The resulting pork business had pro forma net revenue of approximately US\$6.3 billion, and a processing capacity of about 90,000 hogs per day and two million pounds of bacon per week.<sup>23</sup> After the acquisition closed, the new JBS-Cargill entity was twice as large as the next largest pork integrator (Hormel) and four times larger than the fifth and sixth largest firms (Triumph and Seaboard, each with under five percent of the national slaughter capacity).<sup>24</sup>

67. Barriers to entry kept competitors out of the pork packing industry. New entry into pork processing is costly and time consuming. Construction of a large-scale slaughter facility would take hundreds of millions of dollars and the additional planning, design and permitting costs are substantial. In 2012, it cost Cargill \$25 million just to expand an existing facility. Building a facility from scratch would be considerably more.<sup>25</sup>

68. The concentration level in the pork industry was optimal for collusion. WH Group Limited, the parent company of Smithfield, characterized the U.S. market pork

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<sup>23</sup> JBS Concludes Cargill Pork Acquisition (Oct. 30, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> *Anticompetitive Impacts of Proposed JBS-Cargill Pork Acquisition*, at 4 (White Paper).

<sup>25</sup> *Id.* at 7.

industry as “relatively mature and concentrated.”<sup>26</sup> Both of these factors – maturity and concentration – make an industry more susceptible to collusion.

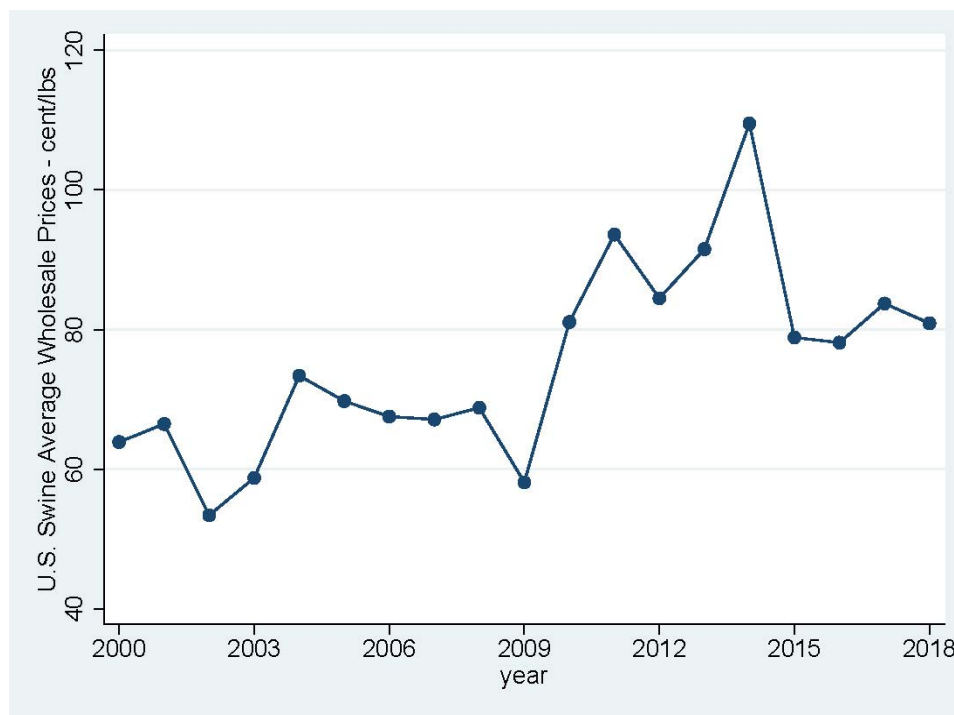
69. The level of concentration in the pork industry therefore rested in an ideal zone for collusion. Because the industry was dominated by a relative handful of integrators, it was feasible to manipulate price through an agreement among the relatively few dominant players, whose market power greatly simplified the organizational complexity of the price-fixing agreement. Further, because none of the largest producers were capable of independently controlling price through their own production, such an agreement was necessary to inflate price.

**F. Abnormal pricing during the Class Period demonstrates the success of the collusive scheme.**

70. Beginning in 2009, the pork industry showed abnormal price movements. According to aggregate prices published by the USDA, the hog market year average price was at or below \$50 every year between 1998 and 2009, before increasing to \$76.30 in 2015. The following graph shows the unprecedented increase in swine prices beginning in 2009, and staying elevated through 2018:

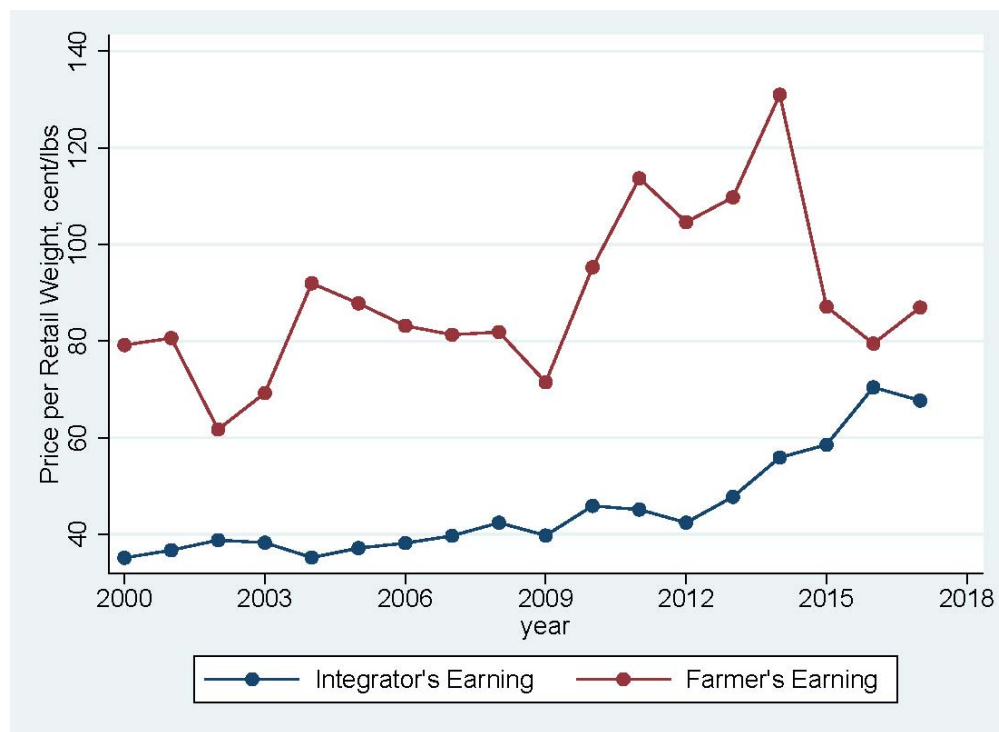
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<sup>26</sup> WH Group Interim Report, at 5 (2017).

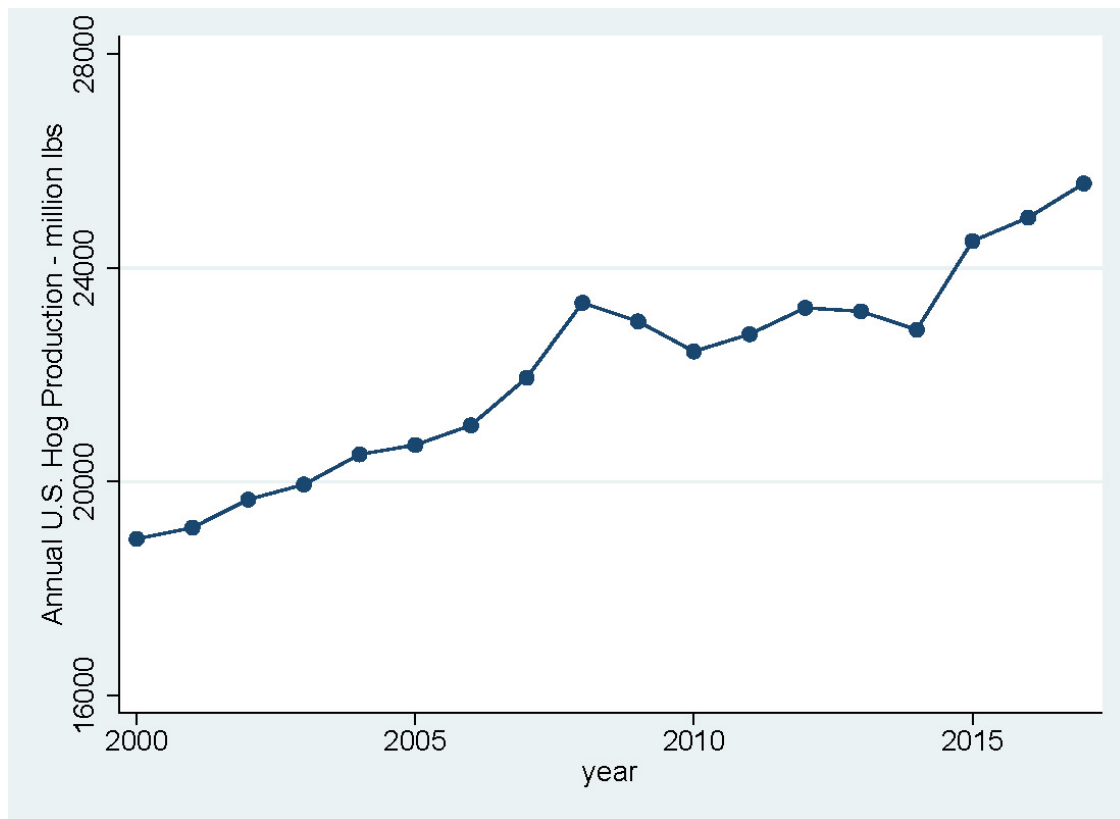
**Figure 2: Average Hog Wholesale Prices in Cents per lb., 2000-2018**

As this figure demonstrates, pork wholesale prices increased in 2009 and 2014, and continuously remained at this higher level compared to the years prior to 2009.

71. Publicly available (albeit aggregated data) also shows that during this period, whole price variation/risk was almost entirely shouldered by farmers, while the pork integrators' earnings increased steadily over the years 2009 to 2017, with a slight decline in 2017:

**Figure 3: Integrators and Farmers (Growers) Earning per Retail weight, 2000-2017****G. Capacity and supply restraints during the Class Period.**

72. As demonstrated in the following chart, at several points during the Class Period, the pork integrators acted in a concerted way to decrease supply. In 2009, 2010, and again in 2013, the pork industry cut production. (The production dip in 2014 reflected the adverse impacts from the deadly pig disease, porcine epidemic diarrhea virus, which took place in the spring and summer of 2014.) The decreases in production largely occurred after decrease in pork wholesale prices:

**Figure 4: U.S. Annual Commercial Hog Production by Weight, 2000-2017**

73. In public earnings calls, Defendants made statements regarding their intentions to either stabilize or decrease supply (although gave false reasons for this stabilization). For example, in May 2009, Larry Pope, the CEO and President of Smithfield, stated:

In terms of chronology of how I say we proactively managed this business, in February of last year--February of '08, not February of '09--*we made the decision with the over-supply of livestock to take the leadership position and start reducing our sow herds because we saw the overproduction and the oversupplies of the hogs into the market, which was driving our hog market down. We started a reduction of 50,000 sows*



***and 1 million of our 18 million pigs, we started taking out of the system.***<sup>27</sup>

74. In May 2009, Hormel confirmed that “[w]e see a contraction in the overall supply of hogs for the year but not as much as we’d originally anticipated. And I would expect that prices will be somewhat less than last year, but higher than what we’ve seen in the first half of the year.”<sup>28</sup>

75. In June 2009, the CEO of Smithfield stated that the current cuts were not enough and more were needed to “fix” the hog industry and that “[s]omebody else has got to do something”:

One of the things that we’re doing is managing what you can do and the 3% relates to one of our operations and it’s our -- I’ll tell you, it’s our Texas operation that sells pigs to seaboard. Seaboard knows that. . . . ***That 3%, let me say that, our 3% will not fix the hog industry. That part I’m confident of. Somebody else has got to do something.*** We cut 13%. The first 10% didn’t fix it. I don’t think us going from 10 to 13 is going to fix the hog business.<sup>29</sup>

76. In September 2009, the CEO of Smithfield stated that he had conversations with “sizable large producers” and that they would be doing some liquidation:

***We can’t solve the problem. But the answer to that is yes, I have had conversations with several sizable, more than sizable large producers, in fact very large producers, and I would tell you they are doing some liquidation.*** But again, I don’t think they can solve it.

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<sup>27</sup> Smithfield Foods at BMO Capital Markets Agriculture, Protein & Fertilizer Conference – Final (May 13, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Q2 2009 Hormel Foods Corporation Earnings Conference Call – Final (May 21, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Q4 2009 Smithfield Foods Earnings Conference Call – Final (June 16, 2009).

I think this industry has got to solve it collectively. I do believe everyone is now looking, and when I'm talking to people who are financially extremely strong and they are cutting back, that's got to be a statement about those people who are not financially strong. ***But the answer is, yes, there are others cutting back. We're not the only one.***<sup>30</sup>

77. In March 2010, when asked about fourth quarter and 2011 volumes for pork,

Larry Pope, the CEO of Smithfield, indicated that further cuts were still to come:

Hog volumes for the rest of the fiscal year. That's going to have the impact starting next fiscal year when there is going to be 13,000 less. But I think we'll pick up some of that in our other operations. But I think 8,000 or 9,000 or 10,000 of those a day will disappear from our operations and that represents about 8% of our, 8% of the hogs will be down. That's for also the fresh pork side.<sup>31</sup>

78. The pork producers acknowledged access to information that allowed them to know that the supply of pork would not be increasing. For example, in December 2010,

Larry Pope, the CEO of Smithfield, stated:

We certainly compare ourselves to our competitors as best we can. ***Given the information we think we have public plus what we think we know privately, how many they kill, what their processing levels are and things like to. This is information you may not quite have.*** And we have been certainly impressed with how our competitors have been able to achieve margins that we have not been able to achieve because our fresh pork competes very competitively with theirs.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Event Brief of Q1 2010 Smithfield Foods Earnings Conference Call (Sept. 8, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> Event Brief of Q3 2010 Smithfield Foods Earnings Conference Call – Final (Mar. 11, 2010).

<sup>32</sup> Event Brief of Q2 2011 Smithfield Foods Earnings Conference Call – Final (Dec. 2010).

Smithfield had access to competitively sensitive information from its competitors through the Agri Stats reports, which allowed it to know confidential supply information from its competitors.

79. Supply level information regarding competitors allowed them to know that supply would not increase in the future, given the lifecycles of the animals. In February 2011, Tyson's chief operating officer (COO) stated:

I think there is still a widely held belief that our Beef and Pork profitability isn't sustainable. I want to again explain why we don't believe that is true. If we look at supply, current cattle and hogs production levels can't change much in 2011 because of the limits of the animals' lifecycles.

Again, the way to know the level of production in the industry would be through the provision of competitively sensitive information by a competitor of Tyson.

80. In the face of ever-increasing margins, when asked whether the type of profits would continue, in March 2011, Smithfield publicly signaled to its competitors that it would not increase capacity, even in the face of the clear profitability:

LARRY POPE: We closed last night at nearly \$64 for hogs. Yet we are projecting over the next 90 days we will be up another 20% from that. I mean those are big numbers to get the meat prices in the retail and food service case to cover that. . .

HEATHER JONES: So you are just striking a note of caution *because you know it can't stay this way indefinitely*; but it's not that you foresee this reversion to that norm over the near term?

BO MANLY: I don't see it on the horizon, on the foreseeable horizon. We are still going to have -- should have good margins, but I can't believe --

LARRY POPE: Heather, we are sitting here today, we are halfway -- closing in on halfway through our fourth quarter, and we have had very good margins through February and March, through today. We have got double-digit margins today.

BO MANLY: It will correct itself over the long run, because this type of return on investment would attract capital, would attract expansion, and we kill more pigs and drive the margins lower. So it will either happen by itself or someone is going to build a plant.

HEATHER JONES: All right, okay. Thank you.

LARRY POPE: You get two-year visibility on that, though. You get to know when somebody is building a plant because they have got to file for a permit and they have actually got to build the thing. . . . *And by the way, we are not going to build a new plant to expand capacity.*<sup>33</sup>

81. In March 2012, the VP of Finance and chief accounting officer of Smithfield stated that no one in the industry would be “real excited about adding capacity” when the losses of 24 to 36 months ago were considered:

Nonetheless, you see some pretty significant fluctuations. Just two weeks ago, I think we had -- there were rumors the Chinese buying corn, and boom, all of a sudden the corn market is up \$0.20, \$0.30. So there is some volatility there. And what I would tell you is that keeps a lid on pork production. The pork guys in the United States have not forgotten 24 or 36 months ago when there were significant losses in the industry. *There is no one going to be real excited about adding capacity, adding sows at a time when we've got such volatility.*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Event Brief of Q3 2011 Smithfield Foods Earnings Conference Call – Final (Mar. 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Smithfield Foods at Barclays Bank High Yield Bond and Syndicated Loan Conference – Final (Mar. 26, 2012).

**H. Overcharges due to the cartel were reflected in higher pork prices.**

82. The USDA has stated that high levels of market concentration allow the largest participants to extract more of the economic value from food transactions, but “consumers typically bear the burden, paying higher prices for goods of lower quality.”<sup>35</sup>

83. The Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks commonly purchased products in its Consumer Price Index (CPI). Those prices show that the retail price of pork has increased substantially for consumers over the Class Period. For example, the price of a pound of bacon has increased from \$3.57 at the end of 2009 to \$5.60 at the end of 2017:

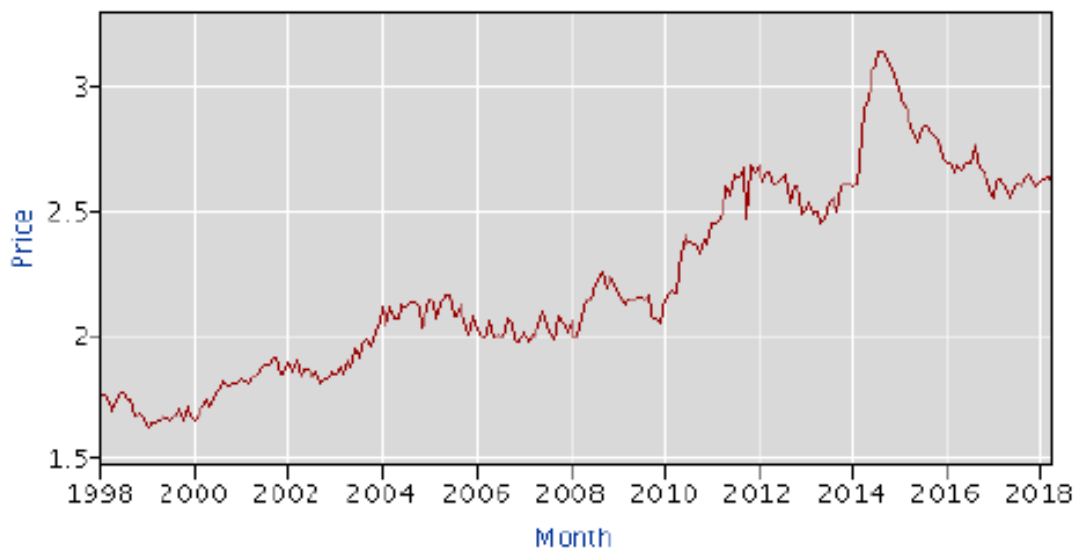
**Figure 5: CPI-Average Price Data for Bacon, Sliced, per pound, from 1995-2017**



<sup>35</sup> John King (USDA), *Concentration and Technology in Agricultural Input Industries*, at 2 (March 2001).

84. Similarly, the CPI index for other pork products, excluding canned ham and luncheon slices, show a marked increase over the Class Period, moving from \$2.05 per pound at the end of 2009 to \$2.65 at the end of 2017:

**Figure 6: CPI-Average Price Data for Other Pork, per pound, from 1995-2017**



85. And the CPI index for another commonly purchased consumer item, ham, shows an increase from \$2.15 at the end of 2009 to \$2.91 at the end of 2017:

**Figure 7: CPI-Average Price Data for Ham, per pound, from 1995-2017**



86. Given these market conditions, the overcharge due to Defendants' anticompetitive agreement to stabilize the price and supply of pork was borne in large part by Plaintiff and the Plaintiff Class.

**I. Defendants actively concealed the conspiracy.**

87. Throughout the Class Period, Defendants effectively, affirmatively, and fraudulently concealed their unlawful combination and conspiracy from Plaintiff and class members.

88. The combination and conspiracy alleged herein was fraudulently concealed by Defendants by various means and methods, including, but not limited to secret meetings, surreptitious communications between Defendants by the use of the telephone or in-person meetings in order to prevent the existence of written records, limiting any explicit reference to competitor pricing or supply restraint communications on documents, communicating competitively sensitive data to one another through Agri Stats - a "proprietary, privileged, and confidential" system that kept both the content and participants in the system secret, and concealing the existence and nature of their competitor supply restraint and price discussions from non-conspirators (including customers).

89. In 2009, the President of Agri Stats, Bryan Snyder, commented on how secretive the true nature of Agri Stats was when he stated:

Agri Stats has always been kind of a quiet company. *There's not a whole lot of people that know a lot about us obviously due to confidentiality that we try to protect. We don't advertise. We don't talk about what we do. It's always kind of just in the background*, and really our specialty is working

directly with companies about their opportunities and so forth.<sup>36</sup>

90. At the same 2009 presentation, when discussing “bottom line numbers” (a company’s net earnings), Mr. Snyder declined to display those numbers publicly, stating “I’m not going to display the actual bottom line to the group here just because of the confidentiality nature of the information.”<sup>37</sup> And yet, despite refusing to show this information publicly, competitors were provided with the “bottom line numbers” of their competitors on a regular basis via the reports discussed above. These statements acted to conceal the true detail and nature of the Agri Stats reports from Plaintiff and the public in general.

91. At other times, producers attributed the stability in the pork market to other reasons such as “good programs with our retailers” and “lower grain costs.” As Larry Pope, the CEO Of Smithfield stated in June 2012:

KEN ZASLOW: What evidence do you have to actually give you some confidence that fresh pork margins will improve sequentially throughout the year?

LARRY POPE: Strong exports, \$71 hog today, good programs with our retailers, and lower grain cost in the future and a futures market that says the hog market's going to be fine. I guess beyond that, you've got chicken and beef that are going to be down significantly.

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<sup>36</sup> Sanderson Farms Investor Day – Final (Oct. 2009).

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*



BO MANLY: And I think there is also some optimism that the US consumer may have some greater disposable income from less gasoline prices and improvement in the economy.<sup>38</sup>

92. By virtue of the fraudulent concealment of their wrongful conduct by Defendants and all of their co-conspirators, the running of any statute of limitations has been tolled and suspended with respect to any claims and rights of action that Plaintiff and the other class members have as a result of the unlawful combination and conspiracy alleged in this complaint.

## V. CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS

93. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of itself and as a class action under the provisions of Rule 23(a), (b)(2) and (b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure on behalf of the members of the following Plaintiff Class:

All persons who purchased pork directly from any of the Defendants or any co-conspirator identified in this action, or their respective subsidiaries or affiliates for use or delivery in the United States from at least as early as January 1, 2009 until the Present. Specifically excluded from this Class are the Defendants; the officers, directors or employees of any Defendant; any entity in which any Defendant has a controlling interest; and any affiliate, legal representative, heir or assign of any Defendant. Also excluded from this Class are any federal, state or local governmental entities, any judicial officer presiding over this action and the members of his/her immediate family and judicial staff, any juror assigned to this action, and any co-conspirator identified in this action.

94. **Class Identity:** The Plaintiff Class is readily identifiable and is one for which records should exist.

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<sup>38</sup> Event Brief of Q4 2012 Smithfield Foods Earnings Conference Call – Final (June 14, 2012).

95. **Numerosity:** Plaintiff does not know the exact number of class members because such information presently is in the exclusive control of Defendants. Plaintiff believes that due to the nature of the trade and commerce involved, there are thousands of Class members geographically dispersed throughout the United States, such that joinder of all class members is impracticable.

96. **Typicality:** Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the members of the Plaintiff Class because Plaintiff purchased pork directly from one or more of the Defendants, and therefore Plaintiff's claims arise from the same common course of conduct giving rise to the claims of the members of the Class and the relief sought is common to the Class.

97. **Common Questions Predominate:** There are questions of law and fact common to the Class, including, but not limited to:

- A. Whether Defendants and their co-conspirators engaged in an agreement, combination, or conspiracy to fix, raise, elevate, maintain, or stabilize prices of pork sold in interstate commerce in the United States;
- B. The identity of the participants of the alleged conspiracy;
- C. The duration of the conspiracy alleged herein and the acts performed by Defendants and their co-conspirators in furtherance of the conspiracy;
- D. Whether the alleged conspiracy violated the antitrust laws;

- E. Whether the conduct of Defendants and their co-conspirators, as alleged in this Complaint, caused injury to the business or property of the Plaintiff and the other members of the class;
- F. The effect of Defendants' alleged conspiracy on the prices of pork sold in the United States during the Class Period;
- G. Whether Plaintiff and other members of the classes are entitled to, among other things, injunctive relief and if so, the nature and extent of such injunctive relief; and
- H. The appropriate class-wide measure of damages.

These and other questions of law or fact which are common to the members of the Class predominate over any questions affecting only individual members of the Plaintiff Class.

98. **Adequacy:** Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class in that Plaintiff's interests are aligned with, and not antagonistic to, those of the other members of the Class who directly purchased pork and Plaintiff has retained counsel competent and experienced in the prosecution of class actions and antitrust litigation to represent itself and the Class.

99. **Superiority:** A class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy since individual joinder of all damaged Class members is impractical. Prosecution as a class action will eliminate the possibility of duplicative litigation. The relatively small damages suffered by individual Class members compared to the expense and burden of individual prosecution of the claims asserted in this litigation means that, absent a class action, it would not be feasible for Class members to

seek redress for the violations of law herein alleged. Further, individual litigation presents the potential for inconsistent or contradictory judgments and would greatly magnify the delay and expense to all parties and to the court system. Therefore, a class action presents far fewer case management difficulties and will provide the benefits of unitary adjudication, economy of scale and comprehensive supervision by a single court.

100. The Class is readily definable and is one for which records likely exist in the files of Defendants and their co-conspirators.

101. The prosecution of separate actions by individual Class members would create the risk of inconsistent or varying adjudications, establishing incompatible standards of conduct for Defendants.

102. Defendants have acted on grounds generally applicable to the Class, thereby making final injunctive relief appropriate with respect to the Class as a whole.

## **VI. ANTITRUST INJURY**

103. Defendants' anticompetitive conduct had the following effects, among others:

- A. Price competition has been restrained or eliminated with respect to pork;
- B. The prices of pork have been fixed, raised, stabilized, or maintained at artificially inflated levels;
- C. Direct purchasers of pork have been deprived of free and open competition; and
- D. Direct purchasers of pork paid artificially inflated prices.

104. The purpose of the conspiratorial conduct of the Defendants and their co-conspirators was to raise, fix, or maintain the price of pork and, as a direct and foreseeable

result. Plaintiff and the Classes paid supra-competitive prices for pork during the Class Period.

105. By reason of the alleged violations of the antitrust laws, Plaintiff and the Classes have sustained injury to their businesses or property, having paid higher prices for pork than they would have paid in the absence of Defendants' illegal contract, combination, or conspiracy and as a result have suffered damages.

106. This is an antitrust injury of the type that the antitrust laws were meant to punish and prevent.

#### **VII. VIOLATION OF SECTION 1 OF THE SHERMAN ACT**

107. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the allegations in the preceding paragraphs.

108. Defendants and all of their co-conspirators entered into and engaged in a combination or conspiracy in unreasonable restraint of trade in violation of Section 1 of the Sherman Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1.

109. Defendants' acts in furtherance of their combination or conspiracy were authorized, ordered, or done by their officers, agents, employees, or representatives while actively engaged in the management of Defendants' affairs.

110. At least as early as January 1, 2009, and continuing until present, the exact dates being unknown to Plaintiff, Defendants and all of their co-conspirators entered into a continuing agreement, understanding and conspiracy in restraint of trade to fix, raise, stabilize, and maintain prices for pork, thereby creating anticompetitive effects.

111. Defendants' anticompetitive acts had a direct, substantial, and foreseeable effect on interstate commerce by raising and fixing prices for pork throughout the United States.

112. The conspiratorial acts and combinations have caused unreasonable restraints in the market for pork.

113. As a result of Defendants' unlawful conduct, Plaintiff and the members of the Class have been harmed by being forced to pay inflated, supracompetitive prices for pork.

114. In formulating and carrying out the alleged agreement, understanding and conspiracy, Defendants and all of their co-conspirators did those things that they combined and conspired to do, including but not limited to the acts, practices, and course of conduct set forth in this Complaint. Defendants' conspiracy had the following effects, among others:

- A. Price competition in the market for pork has been restrained, suppressed, and/or eliminated in the United States;
- B. Prices for pork sold by Defendants, their divisions, subsidiaries, and affiliates, and all of their co-conspirators have been fixed, raised, stabilized, and maintained at artificially high, non-competitive levels throughout the United States; and
- C. Plaintiff and members of the Class who directly purchased pork from Defendants, their divisions, subsidiaries, and affiliates, and all of their

co-co-conspirators, have been deprived of the benefits of free and open competition in the purchase of pork.

115. Defendants took all of the actions alleged in this Complaint with the knowledge and intended effect that their actions would proximately cause the price of pork to be higher than it would be but for Defendants' conduct.

116. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' anticompetitive conduct, Plaintiff and members of the Class have been injured in their business or property and will continue to be injured in their business and property by paying more for pork than they would have paid and will pay in the absence of the conspiracy.

117. The alleged contract, combination, or conspiracy is a *per se* violation of the federal antitrust laws.

#### **VIII. REQUEST FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendants as follows:

118. The Court determine that this action may be maintained as a class action under Rule 23(a), (b)(2), and (b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, appoint Plaintiff as Class Representative and its counsel of record as Class Counsel, and direct that at a practicable time notice of this action, as provided by Rule 23(c)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, be given to the Class;

119. The unlawful conduct, conspiracy or combination alleged herein be adjudged and decreed:

- A. An unreasonable restraint of trade or commerce in violation of Section 1 of the Sherman Act; and

B. *A per se* violation of Section 1 of the Sherman Act;

120. Plaintiff and the Class recover damages, to the maximum extent allowed under federal antitrust laws, and that a joint and several judgment in favor of Plaintiff and the members of the Class be entered against Defendants in an amount to be trebled under U.S. antitrust laws;

121. Defendants, their affiliates, successors, transferees, assignees and other officers, directors, partners, agents and employees thereof, and all other persons acting or claiming to act on their behalf or in concert with them, be permanently enjoined and restrained from in any manner continuing, maintaining or renewing the conduct, conspiracy, or combination alleged herein, or from entering into any other conspiracy or combination having a similar purpose or effect, and from adopting or following any practice, plan, program, or device having a similar purpose or effect;

122. Defendants, their affiliates, successors, transferees, assignees and other officers, directors, partners, agents and employees thereof, and all other persons acting or claiming to act on their behalf or in concert with them, be permanently enjoined and restrained from in any manner continuing, maintaining, or renewing the sharing of highly sensitive competitive information that permits individual identification of company's information;

123. Plaintiff and the members of the Class be awarded pre- and post- judgment interest as provided by law, and that such interest be awarded at the highest legal rate from and after the date of service of this Complaint;



124. Plaintiff and the members of the Class recover their costs of suit, including reasonable attorneys' fees, as provided by law; and

125. Plaintiff and the members of the Class have such other and further relief as the case may require and the Court may deem just and proper.

### **IX. JURY TRIAL DEMANDED**

126. Plaintiff demands a trial by jury, pursuant to Rule 38(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, of all issues so triable.

Dated: August 16, 2018

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